Joint readiness training, Fort Polk

Joint Vision 2010: A Red Team Assessment

U.S. Air Force (Val Gampis)

By CHARLES J. DUNLAP, JR.

How will the Armed Forces fight future wars? *Joint Vision 2010* professes to offer some answers by furnishing a template to "channel the vitality and innovation of our people and leverage technological opportunities to achieve new levels of effectiveness in joint warfighting." The vision has generated considerable interest and praise. A quintessentially American document, it relies on technological preeminence and an uncompromising faith in the superiority of the individual soldier. *JV 2010* suggests that the United States plans to approach warfare in the future by embracing the fundamentals that have marked its warfighting strategy for most of the 20th century.

Potential enemies, however, may approach warfare differently. Some experts contend conflicts in the future are likely to occur between disparate civilizations whose peoples may not share Western values or democratic ideals. Similarly, it is asserted that the post-Cold War world is experiencing a reemergence of warrior societies which are psychologically distinct from the West.

However well *JV 2010* fits the future American way of war, it must be evaluated from the perspective of potential enemies. Given our template, how might such enemies prepare to fight us? In short, what is the red team analysis of *JV 2010*?

Organized, Trained, and Equipped

A red team may conclude that there is no future in force-on-force symmetrical warfighting. Defeating U.S. forces on the battlefield has been very difficult in the modern era and those nations who have attempted it, such as Iraq, have often suffered crushing defeats. In fact, the awesome U.S. conventional capability in the Gulf War prompted the chief of staff of the Indian armed forces to assert that the only way to fight the United States is with nuclear weapons.

So long as America maintains its nuclear deterrent, it is unlikely that an enemy will resort to weapons of mass destruction. During Desert Shield/Desert Storm the ambiguities of possible U.S. responses dissuaded Saddam Hussein from using such weapons and would likely affect all but the most irrational actors in a similar way. With defeat of the U.S. military seemingly beyond reach, how might an enemy confront America in the future?

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Many might conclude that it is not necessary to overcome U.S. forces. Instead, they might focus on another leg of Clausewitz's trinity, the people. Taking a cue from North Vietnam, which vanquished the United States without subduing its forces, future enemies might see public opinion as America's center of gravity. A likely red team strategy thus could aim to weaken that support.

One way to achieve this objective would be to exploit the phenomenon of casualty aversion that is so influential in U.S. political and military thinking. *JV 2010* recognizes this and notes that the "American people will . . . expect us to be more efficient in protecting lives and resources while accomplishing our mission successfully."

The response to the deaths of 18 U.S. Rangers in Somalia may lead an enemy to conclude that this is an effective way to blunt American power. Those casualties were seemingly enough to erode support at home and instigate a withdrawal. Thus an enemy may focus on causing casualties regardless of their own losses or whether they achieve a tactical win.

Moreover, depending on the success of full dimensional protection as depicted in *JV 2010*, an enemy may seek to produce casualties among the expanding ranks of civilians who accompany forces rather than among military personnel per se. The high-tech military envisioned in *JV 2010* will likely require support technicians who are less capable of defending themselves. Assaults on civilians could cause them to abandon their jobs at critical moments.

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An especially Machiavellian and populous enemy might deliberately induce U.S. forces to kill large numbers of its own people to create a reaction that undermines public support. To many in the United States, even the deaths of brutal enemy combatants is somehow offensive to notions of fair play. During the Gulf War, for example, television images of wrecked Iraqi vehicles along the so-called "highway of death" contributed to the early termination of hostilities, thereby allowing elite Iraqi forces to escape destruction.

In short, the red team may take a completely opposite view from *JV 2010* by considering the physical defeat of U.S. forces as a secondary objective or non-objective.

Values and People

Success depends on the moral strength of individual soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen, according to *JV 2010*. Yet ironically American values may be seen as a weakness to be exploited. A red team might conclude that such exploitation is an effective means of diminishing a high-tech advantage. For example, *JV 2010* asserts that "long-range precision capability . . . is emerging as a key factor." The Libyans reportedly threatened to counter such high-tech weapons by using their own people as human shields around key facilities. The precedent? The Serbs resisted NATO's precision munitions by the simple expedient of chaining U.N. hostages to potential targets.

The lesson is that the United States must find ways to deal with streetfighters who refuse to play by the rules. Their viciousness has the potential to create corrosive moral dilemmas for U.S. troops and even traumatize them into inaction. Advocates of *JV 2010* must insist that enemies who engage in such actions are held accountable to discourage barbarism in countering high tech.

JV 2010 states that U.S. forces are the best trained in the world. But a red team analysis reveals that this may not be as advantageous as some believe. First, we may need more training than our future enemies. Relative to the emerging warrior societies, those in the West make poor soldiers and can achieve parity in fighting spirit only through intensive training of selectively recruited forces.

Where we have excelled is in *technical* training. Yet red team analysis reveals that low-cost technology substantially narrows that advantage. Computerized instruction and simulation already furnish a cheap way of teaching technical skills. Moreover, a $49 computer simulation program can provide instruction in tactical combat skills.

More fundamentally, forces may not require as much technical skill as *JV 2010* expects. Sophisticated, user-friendly software may so simplify the operation of otherwise complex weapons systems that advanced training is unnecessary. Many systems will also have computerized self-diagnosis and repair capabilities.

As implied by *JV 2010*, technology is becoming available to provide individual soldiers with unprecedented access to all kinds of information on the battlefield. If its cost declines as radically as that of other information devices, enemies could deploy masses of technically untutored soldiers in the belief that their forces could obtain the necessary expertise anywhere on the battlefield. Technology-created "virtual" noncommissioned officers, for example, could obviate an advantage long enjoyed by the United States.

The training which the Armed Forces will most need in the future is not in technical skills per se, but in the warrior spirit, unit cohesion, and other intangibles unique to warfighting.

Technological Superiority?

JV 2010 places heavy emphasis on high-tech weaponry. This focus reflects much of the debate over the so-called revolution in military affairs occasioned by computer and communications technologies. But a variety of factors conspire to deny U.S. forces the technological advantage that *JV 2010* seems to demand.

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Most important is the plain fact that high-tech, information-based weapons increasingly rely on technology that has commercial applications. An enemy could leverage the global research and development base for the latest systems. In many instances, especially in less-developed parts of the world, international aid and other incentives may be available to build a dual-use information systems manufacturing base with great military potential. Because it also fosters economic development, the usual guns or butter debate need not arise.

In sum, an enemy will be able to purchase on the open market the same capability that the United States employs—and perhaps more quickly and efficiently. Consequently, it would be wise to urge a radical reform of the procurement process to ensure that America has the most advanced weaponry available.

According to *JV 2010*, "We must have information superiority." Few aspects of *JV 2010* are more vexing than its unwarranted confidence in the capability to achieve information superiority on tomorrow's battlefields. All indications point to a future where an avalanche of details on current operations is open to anyone for a modest investment. Commercial satellites will provide high-resolution images that were previously the exclusive domain of intelligence services in developed nations. The Internet is a simple, cheap, risk-free way of collecting intelligence data. Another innovation, individual telephones linked by satellite for soldiers on the battlefield, will be extremely vulnerable to monitoring by unfriendly forces. Perhaps the greatest source of red team information will be the media. Equipped with the latest technology and free from reliance on or control by any government, the media will be able to report on every aspect of U.S. military operations nearly instantaneously.

In truth, the proliferation of information sources will defy attempts by any one party to gain genuine superiority; there will simply be too many information sources, many of which cannot be degraded because of legal or political constraints. Therefore it is troubling that *JV 2010* appears to be so dependent upon information supremacy. What if that capability is not achieved? We should prepare to fight in the more realistic environment of information parity, which would also have the benefit of even greater dominance should information superiority somehow be achieved.

One should not conclude that *JV 2010* is fundamentally flawed. To the contrary, in broad terms its genius is that it is built on what can be viewed as a postmodern American way of war. However, like any template its ultimate effectiveness will be determined by the quality of the ideas that fill it.

It is critical, however, to consider a red team analysis in implementing *JV 2010*. Such an examination might reveal a phenomenon that parallels thinking on the unintended consequences of technology. For example, *JV 2010* touts precision engagement as a means to reduce the "risk to forces and minimize collateral damage." To many Americans the advent of smart weapons heralds a more humane era of warfare; indeed, some find precision strikes against purely military targets to reflect favorably on the moral character of precise weaponry.

Do others accept this view of the benevolence of precision weapons? Apparently not the Russians. As David Markow reported in the February 1997 issue of *Air Force*:

> Many Russian military theorists believe nuclear weapons provide the best answer to the challenge posed by conventionally armed precision guided munitions . . . Russian generals fear that, in a general war, Western nations could employ such "smart munitions" to degrade Russian strategic forces, without ever having to go nuclear themselves. Consequently, said General Volkov, Russia "should enjoy the right to consider the first [enemy] use of precision weapons as the beginning of unrestricted nuclear war against it."

As this passage illustrates, the high tech which underpins so much of the template found in *JV 2010* might have wholly unintended effects. Accordingly, decisionmakers should insist that its tenets be continually tested not only against U.S. perspectives, but also against those of potential enemies.

If *JV 2010* assumes a mantle of infallibility whereby merely challenging its assumptions is regarded as blasphemous, it could be a catastrophic failure. Unless leaders demand a rigorous and continuous red team analysis, the Nation may find itself vulnerable to enemies whose 21st century vision is profoundly at odds with all that we hold dear.   **JFQ**

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